BERNAMA MALAYSIAeBiz
WEEKLY BUSINESS ROUNDUP 4 - 8 MAY 2015

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This Week's Highlight : Perak Sultan's Enthronement Steeped In Tradition, Resplendence

RESPLENDENT...The customary enthronement of the Sultan of Perak XXXV, Sultan Nazrin Muizzuddin Shah, took place steeped in the tradition and splendour of the Perak Malay Sultanate at the majestic Istana Iskandariah on the bank of the Perak River in Bukit Chandan, in Kuala Kangsar Wednesday.

KUALA KANGSAR -- The customary enthronement of the Sultan of Perak XXXV, Sultan Nazrin Muizzuddin Shah, took place steeped in the tradition and splendour of the Perak Malay Sultanate at the majestic Istana Iskandariah on the bank of the Perak River in Bukit Chandan, here Wednesday. The ceremony marked the continuity of the Perak sultanate reign. Sultan Nazrin Shah and Raja Permaisuri Perak, resplendent in songket attire of royal gold hue, entered the Balairung Seri to the accompaniment of the tune of 'Raja Berangkat', played by the nobat (royal music) ensemble.

This Week's Top Stories

Monday

18th AFMGM+3 Reaffirms Commitment To Strengthening Region's Economy

From Azizul Ahmad

BAKU (Azerbaijan) -- The 18th ASEAN Plus Three Finance Ministers' and Central Bank Governors' Meeting (AFMGM+3) reaffirmed the commitment to strengthening the region's economic environment and responses to external shocks through continuing regional financial cooperation. The Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors of ASEAN, China, Japan and Korea (ASEAN+3) met here under the co-chairmanship of Malaysia and South Korea.

Tuesday

S'pore, M'sia Reaffirm Success Of High Speed Rail Project

SINGAPORE -- Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and his Malaysian counterpart Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak reaffirmed Tuesday that both countries are fully committed to the success of the high speed rail (HSR) project linking the republic and Kuala Lumpur. In a joint statement released after the Singapore-Malaysian Leaders' Retreat here, however, both leaders said the project's initial completion target of 2020 needed to be re-assessed given the scale and complexity of the project.

Wednesday

M'sia-S'pore Bilateral Ties Best Level In History - Najib

By: Tengku Noor Shamsiah Abdullah

SINGAPORE -- Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak described bilateral ties between Malaysia and Singapore as at the best level in history between the two countries where both sides could leverage in creating better opportunites to go forward. "With that kind of relationship, we can look forward to creating opportunities," the Malaysian prime minister told the Malaysian community at a high-tea event organised by the Malaysian Association in Singapore on Tuesday here Wednesday.

Thursday

Malaysia's March Trade Surplus Widens To RM7.82 Bln

KUALA LUMPUR -- Malaysia registered the 209th consecutive month of trade surplus in March 2015, in widening to RM7.82 billion from the RM4.52 billion recorded in February, the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) said. Trade for the month grew 3.9 per cent to RM125.11 billion with exports and imports rising to RM66.47 billion and RM58.64 billion respectively, as compared to the same month last year.

Friday

M'sia On Right Track To Achieve 55 Pct Women Workforce

KUALA LUMPUR -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said that Malaysia was on the right course to achieve the 55 per cent goal of female labour participation rate this year. This is achievable as the women's participation in the workforce had reached 53.6 per cent in 2014 compared to only 46 per cent on 2009, he added in his keynote address at the 'Lead the Change – Women on Boards' programme here Friday.

SMEbrief

RM104.2 Mln Fund For 41 Sarawak Bumi Firms

KUCHING -- The Sarawak Facilitation Fund Committee has approved RM104.2 million in funding for 41 Bumiputera companies since last year, said Assistant Minister in the Chief Minister's Office (Bumiputera Entrepreneur Development) Datuk Naroden Majais. The 41 projects, which had an overall investment value of RM748.5 million, included oil and gas, properties, construction, tourism and food processing, he said Tuesday.

RM115 Mln Boost For Johor Bumi Entrepreneurs

JOHOR BAHARU -- A total of RM115 million will be allocated to Bumiputera entrepreneurs in the state in the government's effort to continue to stimulate entrepreneurial development especially in Iskandar Malaysia.
Bumiputera Agenda Steering Unit (Teraju) chief executive officer, Datuk Husni Salleh, when announcing this, said RM100 million would be channelled through the Facilitation Fund while the balance would be given via the Entrepreneur Development Fund (EDF). "The balance of RM15 million represents a new fund that would be given to the small and micro enterprises, which might not be eligible for the Facilitation Fund to expand their business, launched today, " he told reporters Wednesday.

GST Implementation, A Game Chamber For SMEs

KUALA LUMPUR -- The implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) will be a game changer for small and medium enterprises (SME) in the way they operate their business, says Baracuda Networks Inc's Regional Manager for South East Asia Thiban Darmalingam. He said, during the period of the sales and service tax, most SMEs were working in silo and very much in a contained environment. "Most of the sales data moves within their data centre confined in their store, whereby with GST it changes the whole paradigm in their business operation," he told a press conference here Wednesday.

SMEs, Individuals To Be Trained In Online Business

KUALA LUMPUR -- About 1,800 small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and individuals are set to benefit from training programmes on online business operations. The 24-session programme, starting Thursday, will be jointly conducted by SME Cloud Sdn Bhd and MYNIC Bhd, Technology Park Malaysia said in a statement Wednesday. "The initiative is aimed at heightening awareness among the Malaysian business community on the importance of having an online business identity with the right channel and medium," it said.

PropUP

Property update

Guocoland's Damansara City Offers Singaporeans Luxury Enclave

By Tengku Noor Shamsiah Tengku Abdullah

SINGAPORE -- Damansara City, a luxury-integrated development worth RM2.5 billion (S$927 million) in gross development value by GuocoLand (Malaysia) Bhd, will open a special pre-launch sale for Singaporean investors between 11 am to 7 pm from Saturday to Sunday at The Island Suite, Marina at Keppel Bay, Singapore. In a statement Wednesday, it said the integrated development -- comprising the high-rise luxurious 'DC Residency', two Grade A office towers, a F&B-centric covered lifestyle mall and a UK-managed five-star hotel -- is at various stages of completion and will be fully operational by mid-2016.

FGV To Dispose On Non-Core Business By Q3

KUALA LUMPUR -- Felda Global Ventures Holdings Bhd (FGV) will complete the disposal of its non-core businesses by the third quarter (Q3) of 2015, said group president and chief executive officer, Datuk Mohd Emir Mavani Abdullah Wednesday. The disposal, which includes Felda Travel, Felda Property and Felda Prodata Systems, will be carried out through the open tender process.

UniKL, Partners To Build Affordable Green Houses

KUALA LUMPUR -- Universiti Kuala Lumpur (UniKL) is to partner local industrial players and German-based Rosenheim University of Applied Sciences to build affordable green houses. UniKL President and Chief Executive Officer Prof Datuk Dr Mazliham Mohd Su'ud said Wednesday, a new research centre would be developed to study the right materials to be used which are more affordable and suitable for the Malaysian climate.

Malaysians Capitalising On London's Property Investment

KUALA LUMPUR -- Malaysia is among the countries that is capitalising the lucrative and transparent real estate market in London, United Kingdom.
"Clarity in British rules and regulations has made it easy for foreign investors to transact in the United Kingdom," said Knight Frank LLP, a leading independent global property consultancy, in a statement Wednesday. Among the recent Malaysia-related deals was the sale of the Employees Provident Fund's prime office – One Sheldon Square - in Paddington to a UK REIT British Land for £210 million (RM1.14 billion) at a 4.5 per cent yield.

MARKET

BURSA MALAYSIA

Scoreboard

Gainers - 461

Losers - 316

Not Traded - 684

Unchanged - 324

Value - 1937280746

Volume - 15180718

Exchange Rate
(Ringgit : Foreign Currency)

	Buying	Selling
USD	3.5950	3.5980
EUR	4.0383	4.0427
GBP	5.5643	5.5701
100 YEN	2.9936	2.9973
SGD	2.7004	2.7036

Source: Bank Negara Malaysia

BURSA: FBM KLCI Closes Higher

By Siti Radziah Hamzah

KUALA LUMPUR -- The benchmark FTSE Bursa Malaysia KLCI (FBM KLCI) closed slightly higher Friday, lifted by sustained buying momentum in most heavyweights, led by Maybank and Sime Darby. At 5 pm, the index was 2.55 points higher at 1,807.65, after fluctuating between 1,805.35 and 1,814.28. For the heavyweights, Maybank jumped 14 sen to RM9.29, Sime Darby rose nine sen to RM9.03, with TNB flat at RM13.98, while Public Bank declined four sen to RM19.28. Axiata fell six sen to RM6.62. Inter-Pacific Research Sdn Bhd Head of Research Pong Teng Siew said Bursa Malaysia and its regional peers rebounded from Thursday's losses due to a stabilising global bond market. "However, the market is still in a jittery mode. Investors are also monitoring the US non-farm payrolls data to be released tonight. That will provide pointers for the market's movement next week," he told Bernama. Gainers led losers 461 to 316, with 324 counters unchanged, 684 counters untraded and 10 others suspended. Total volume was slightly lower at 1.52 billion shares worth RM1.93 billion from Thursday's 1.55 billion shares worth RM1.97 billion. Main Market volume fell to 904.95 million units worth RM1.78 billion from 927.22 million units worth RM1.82 billion on Thursday.

FOREX: Ringgit Ends Slightly Lower Against US Dollar

KUALA LUMPUR -- The ringgit ended slightly lower against the US dollar Friday on mild profit taking as investors booked profits ahead of the weekend, dealers said. At 5 pm, the ringgit was quoted at 3.5950/5980 against the greenback compared to 3.5920/5950 on Thursday. A dealer said the British Pound recorded its highest level against the greenback Friday, with the Conservative Party surprisingly set to secure an overall majority in UK General Election 2015. The ringgit was quoted mixed against a basket of major currencies. It depreciated against the Singapore dollar to 2.7004/7036 from Thursday's 2.7002/7032 and edged down against the British pound to 5.5643/5701 from 5.4566/4622. The local unit strengthened against the yen to 2.9936/9973 from 3.0096/0134 and advanced against the euro to 4.0383/0427 from 4.0791/0832.

Money-Market: Short-Term Rates Close Stable On BNM's Intervention

KUALA LUMPUR -- Short-term interbank rates ended on a stable note Friday on Bank Negara Malaysia's (BNM) intervention to absorb excess liquidity from the financial system. The liquidity surplus in the conventional system fell to RM23.27 billion from RM29.37 billion earlier, while in the Islamic system it eased to RM5.95 billion from RM14.30 billion. In the morning, BNM called for two conventional money market, an Al-Wadiah, a Commodity Murabahah Programme and two repo tenders. The central bank also conducted a late conventional money market tender for RM23.3 billion and a RM6 billion Al-Wadiah money market tender, both for three-day money. The overnight Islamic reference rate stood at 3.21 per cent, while the one-week, two and three-week rates stood at 3.27 per cent, 3.32 per cent and 3.35 per cent, respectively.

KLIBOR Futures Untraded

KUALA LUMPUR -- The three-month Kuala Lumpur Interbank Offered Rate (KLIBOR) futures contracts on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives ended the day untraded. May 2015 stood at 96.31, June 2015 remained at 96.34, while July 2015 and September 2015 were pegged at 96.38 and 96.41, respectively. Open interest amounted to 902 contracts. At the 11 am fixing, the underlying three-month KLIBOR stood at 3.72 per cent.

KLCI Futures Closes Sharply Higher

KUALA LUMPUR -- The FTSE Bursa Malaysia KLCI (FBM KLCI) futures contracts closed sharply higher Friday in line with the stronger cash market. At close, May 2015 climbed 14 points to 1,806, June 2015 garnered 13 points to 1,806, while September 2015 and December 2015 rose 11 points each to 1,799. Turnover declined to 7,242 lots from 8,329 lots Thursday, while open interest eased to 38,111 contract from 38,243 contract. The benchmark FBM KLCI ended 2.55 points higher at 1,807.65 Friday.

Universities, Experts Collaborate To Tackle Talent Mismatch In Financial Sector

KUALA LUMPUR -- Selected institutions of higher learning and experts from the local financial services industry (FSI) will collaborate on projects to address the talent mismatch in the country's financial sector. This initiative will be coordinated by the Finance Accreditation Agency (FAA), which is responsible for raising the standards and quality of professional learning and development in the FSI. The move is expected to bring tangible results by the end of this year in helping to ensure that graduates from universities meet the manpower needs of the industry. The FAA, which is an independent quality assurance and accreditation body supported by Bank Negara Malaysia and the Securities Commission Malaysia, comprises a committee of technical experts, industry professionals and leading academics.

CIMB's US$313 Mln Bond Sees Healthy Demand

KUALA LUMPUR -- CIMB Bank Bhd saw healthy demand for its inaugural issuance of a US$313 million 30 years callable zero coupon notes, to be listed on the Taipei Exchange and the Bursa Malaysia. This is the bank's maiden issuance in the Taiwanese market, which is also known as the Formosa bonds market. The landmark issuance saw healthy demand from onshore investors across multiple accounts, culminating in a peak of total orders exceeding US$480 million, allowing the deal to eventually be priced at 4.50 per cent, CIMB said. The attractive yield attained reflected investors' confidence in the credit and financial position of CIMB Bank.

Maybank AM Eyes RM20 Bln AUM By Year-End

KUALA LUMPUR -- Maybank Asset Management Sdn Bhd (Maybank AM), the asset management arm of Maybank Asset Management Group Bhd, is targeting more than RM20 billion in assets under management (AUM) by year-end. Maybank Asset Management Group Chief Executive Officer Nor' Azamin Salleh said as at March 31, 2015, the group's total AUM stood at RM15.2 billion. He said the group, which grew about 21 per cent in 2014, making it the country's fastest growing asset management company, is also eyeing about the same growth this year on the back of various strategies, including the launch of its new Islamic equity Fund. He was speaking at a press conference for the launch of the group's first Islamic equity fund under the ASEAN passport framework known as Maybank Bosera Greater China ASEAN Equity-i Fund, a collaboration with Bosera Asset Management (International) Co Ltd.

EPF Consultation: Initial Results Show Strong Support For Current Option

KUALA LUMPUR -- Preliminary results from the Employees Provident Fund's (EPF) Enhancement Initiatives members' consultation reveal strong support for the option to maintain full withdrawal at age 55 as well as towards the other initiatives. The largest public consultation in the country, which was closed Wednesday after running for two weeks starting April 21, 2015, received 96,448 responses from members, it said in a statement. EPF Chief Executive Officer Datuk Shahril Ridza Ridzuan said the results of the consultation would be analysed and presented to the EPF Board for its further elaboration and deliberation on the next course of action for improvement. "The enhancement initiatives involve major policy changes and it is vital that we engage our members through the members' consultation as we will not make any decisions without obtaining their feedback. We have also taken the opportunity to consult with interested organisations, including the Malaysian Trades Union Congress, Malaysian Employers Federation, Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers, and political parties," he said.

FSPB Releases First Exposure Draft On Code Of Ethics

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Financial Services Professional Board (FSPB) has released its first Exposure Draft on a proposed Code of Ethics for the Financial Services Industry that outlines a set of five broad fundamental principles which include professionalism and integrity. The others are fairness, confidentiality and objectivity and it should be adhered by the institutions and individuals in the financial services industry (FSI), it said in a statement here Wednesday. The exposure draft, FSPB's first step in the development of a set of ethical principles, would be open for comments up to July 6, 2015.The principles would reflect the dynamic nature of the FSI and, when finalised, would underpin FSPB's standard-setting initiatives, said Chairman Tan Sri Azman Hashim.

Affin Gets BNM Nod To Start Talks With Daiwa Securities

KUALA LUMPUR -- Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) has given the nod to Affin Holdings Bhd to commence negotiations with Daiwa Securities Group Inc for the latter to acquire a stake in Affin Hwang Investment Bank Bhd. In a filing to Bursa Malaysia here Wednesday, Affin Holdings said the BNM approval, vide its letter dated April 29, was subject to both parties concluding the negotiations within six months from the date of the said letter. It was reported that Daiwa Securities is keen to acquire a minority stake in Affin Hwang Investment Bank Bhd. "However, the said approval should not be construed as the approval for the proposal. Upon concluding negotiations, Affin Holdings and Daiwa would be required to obtain the prior approval of BNM pursuant to the Financial Services Act 2013 before entering into any agreement," Affin Holdings said.

FGV Upbeat On Revenue Growth In Downstream Sector

From Christine Lim

SEOUL -- Felda Global Ventures Holdings Bhd (FGV) is confident of generating higher revenue from its palm oil and palm-related downstream activities in the next one to two years by exploring new product lines and expanding its production capacity. Head of Palm Downstream cluster Datuk Zakaria Arshad said the world's largest crude palm oil (CPO) producer and third largest oil palm plantation company is looking at the lucrative ramen or Japanese noodle industry as well as the palm-based cosmetics industry. "We have identified a South Korean company that we would like to work together with in the ramen industry and we are talking to them," Zakaria told Bernama at the two-day Malaysia-South Korea Palm Oil Trade Fair & Seminar 2015 (POTS) in Seoul recently.

Manulife Asset Mgmt Declares Income Distributions For 2 Unit Trust Funds

KUALA LUMPUR -- Manulife Asset Management Services Bhd (MAMSB) Tuesday declared income distributions for two of its equity unit trust funds for the financial year ended April 30, 2015. In a statement here, the company said all unit holders who maintained their units in Manulife Investment Dividend Fund (an income fund) and Manulife Investment Shariah Progress Fund (an Islamic small cap fund) as at April 30, 2015 are entitled to receive the distributions, which represent distribution yields of 7.03 per cent and 7.06 per cent, respectively. Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director Wong Boon Choy said: "We are pleased to be able to declare gross distributions of 2.75 sen per unit for Manulife Investment Dividend Fund and 3.00 sen per unit for the Manulife Investment Shariah Progress Fund. As of April 30, 2015, the funds had delivered returns of 37 per cent and 74.79 per cent for the three-year period respectively."

MIHAS 2015 Generates RM1.1 Bln Sales

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Malaysia International Halal Showcase (Mihas 2015) has raked in RM1.1 billion in total sales over its four-day trade show last month. In a statement here Tuesday, the Malaysia External Trade and Development Corporation (Matrade) said out of the total, some RM655.8 million sales were generated from the showcase and the remaining RM443.2 million was from Mihas' annual one-day incoming buying mission (IBM). The IBM attracted 487 foreign buyers involving 307 companies from 41 countries, while there were a total of 2,787 pre-arranged business meetings between international companies and 850 Malaysian exporters from 465 local companies, it said.

TA Investment Declares Distribution For 2 Funds

KUALA LUMPUR -- TA Investment Management Bhd (TAIM) has declared a gross income distribution of 1.5 sen per unit for TA Asia Pacific REITs Income Fund (TAREITs) and 0.8 sen per unit for TA Asian Dividend Income Fund (TADIF) to registered unit holders of the funds as of April 30, 2015. "We expect market sentiment to remain positive in the short term as stimulus is being rolled out in Europe and Japan. Other countries such as China, South Korea and Australia are also looking to boost their struggling economies," said TAIM in a statement here Tuesday.

Hartalega's Pre-Tax Profit Drops To RM276.9 Mln For FY15

KUALA LUMPUR -- Hartalega Holdings Bhd's pre-tax profit decreased to RM276.9 million for the financial year ended March 31, 2015 (FY15), from RM308.9 million a year ago. In a statement here Tuesday, the group said revenue, however, was up 3.5 per cent to RM1.145 million from RM1.107 million previously, driven by higher sales volume. Revenue for the fourth quarter ended March 31, 2015 rose to RM305.1 million, due to the start-up of the group's Next Generation Integrated Glove Manufacturing Complex (NGC) facilities in December 2014. "To date, there are eight production lines operating in the NGC, equivalent to an additional capacity of 2.9 billion pieces of gloves per annum," Hartalega said.

IATA: Air Freight Resumes Modest Growth Trend

KUALA LUMPUR -- The International Air Transport Association (IATA) data for global air freight markets showed a modest 1.6 per cent rise in freight tonne kilometres in March compared to the same month a year ago. The industry's March performance stands in sharp contrast to the exceptionally strong 12.2 per cent rise reported for February. "February's performance, however, was positively skewed by the combined impacts of the timing of the Lunar New Year and the labour dispute at US West Coast seaports," IATA said in a statement here

Tuesday. The association said freight performance in the first quarter of the year indicated year-on-year growth of 5.3 per cent, in line with the general global economic trend, and slightly higher than the 4.5 per cent growth that was anticipated in its December outlook.

ASEAN Economic Community A Boon For Impiana - COO

KUALA LUMPUR -- Impiana Hotel Group (IHG) aims to embark on regional expansion and plans to launch five-star resorts in the Maldives, Indonesia and Cambodia. Impiana said in a statement here Tuesday that it plans to roll out its Impiana Resort and Impiana Private Villas brands in Sanur and Ubud in Bali, Indonesia whereas the Maldives will have Impiana Private Villas. Impiana is also looking into acquiring a few properties in Cambodia, especially at Siem Reap to serve the Angkor Wat market, it said. This regional expansion plan will see Impiana moving into the five-star category and is part of Impiana's ASEAN integration plan. Impiana Group Chief Operating Officer Azrin Kamaluddin said ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) integration will be a boon for Impiana.

KLCC REIT Q1 Pre-Tax Profit Falls To RM230.93 Mln

KUALA LUMPUR -- KLCC Real Estate Investment Trust's (REIT) pre-tax profit decreased to RM230.93 million for the first quarter ended March 31, 2015 from RM243.68 million registered in the same period last year. Revenue also fell to RM326.89 million from RM340.88 million previously. In a filing to Bursa Malaysia here Tuesday, it attributed the drop in profit to the lower contribution from its property investment for office and retail, hotel operations as well as management services. On prospect, KLCC REIT expected its performance for the office and retail segments to remain stable this year, while the hotel segment would continue to tread in a challenging environment due to weak market demand and the scheduled renovation works at the hotel.

F&N Ist Half Pre-Tax Profit Down 0.7 Pct To RM167.8 Mln

KUALA LUMPUR -- Fraser & Neave Holdings Bhd's (F&N) pre-tax profit fell 0.7 per cent to RM167.8 million for the first half of its financial year ended March 31, 2015 from RM168.9 million recorded in the same period last year. Revenue, however, increased 4.9 per cent to RM1.98 billion from RM1.88 billion. In a filing to Bursa Malaysia here Tuesday, the carbonated drinks manufacturer said operating profit for its soft drinks segment fell 30 per cent to RM57.3 million due to lower sales volume, while for the group's diaries Malaysia segment it was up 19.4 per cent to RM47.3 million, attributed to higher trade and consumer off-take, effective trade discounts management and increased penetration.

Cypark Aims For 30 Pct Boost In Revenue From 2017 For LTM Project

PETALING JAYA -- Cypark Resources Bhd is aiming for a 30 per cent boost in revenue or about RM100 million annually from 2017 for its waste-to-energy project in Ladang Tanah Merah (LTM), Negeri Sembilan. Cypark Resources is an integrated environmental technology and engineering provider. Group Chief Executive Officer Datuk Daud Ahmad said the 25-year LTM concession agreement with the government would be formalised by mid-year, with the LTM construction works set for completion by 2017. "The various processes have been resolved with the government and we hope for the signing in mid-year to formalise the agreement," he told reporters here Wednesday. Daud said the LTM, the first of its kind, would generate recurring revenue and is part of the plan to grow the business, within its current business model.

Global Passenger Traffic Demand Rises 7.4 Pct In March

KUALA LUMPUR -- The global passenger traffic demand rose 7.4 per cent in March 2015 compared with the same month last year, driven by the residual effects of leisure travel from the Chinese New Year festival in February. The International Air Transport Association Director General and Chief Executive Officer Tony Tyler said passenger traffic in March remained healthy. "The timing of the Lunar New Year in mid-February contributed to the robust performance as holiday-related travel continued into early March. "We may, however, see a softening of demand in the second quarter. There are signs that regional trade activity in Asia-Pacific may be slowing and Eurozone economic weakness continues to disappoint," he said in a statement Wednesday. March capacity rose 5.6 per cent and load factor climbed 1.3 percentage points to 80.0 per cent.

AirAsia Not Ruling Out Another JV In ASEAN

By M.Saraswathi

KUALA LUMPUR -- AirAsia Bhd is not ruling out the possibility of another joint venture (JV) within the ASEAN region. "New JV's are not out of the question," said Group Chief Executive Officer Tan Sri Tony Fernandes, when asked about expansion plans in ASEAN. AirAsia has at present several JV's in ASEAN, namely Thai AirAsia, Philippines AirAsia, AirAsiaZest and Indonesia AirAsia. However, Fernandes did not reveal which country he has earmarked for the next possible venture, but said the move would further strengthen AirAsia's ASEAN network. "We are also focusing on our fly-thru product (in ASEAN), which connects our long haul guests to our short haul network," he told BERNAMA via e-mail here Tuesday.

MAHB To Bid For Jeddah Airport's Maintenance Job

SEPANG -- Malaysia Airports Holdings Bhd (MAHB) will bid for the maintenance job at the King Abdulaziz International Airport, Jeddah (Saudi Arabia), its Chairman Tan Sri Wan Abdul Aziz Wan Abdullah said. The airport operator has already been pre-qualified for the job. "(However) the (tender) document has not been issued yet," he told reporters after the MAHB's 16th annual general meeting, here Tuesday. Wan Abdul Aziz said in the meantime, MAHB would explore other business opportunities abroad. He said MAHB's international expansion is not limited to an equity acquisition in potential businesses, but also exporting its services. Recently, via its unit, Malaysia Airports Consultancy Services Middle East, MAHB secured a RM23.58 million contract at the New Doha International Airport (NDIA) in Qatar.

Completion Target For Spore-Msia High Speed Rail Project To Be Re-Assessed

SINGAPORE -- The initial completion target of 2020 for the High Speed Rail (HSR) project linking Singapore and Kuala Lumpur will need to be re-assessed given the scale and complexity of the project. This was announced by Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and his Malaysian counterpart Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak in a joint statement released after the Singapore-Malaysian Leaders' Retreat in the republic Tuesday. However, the leaders have reaffirmed that both countries were fully committed to the success of the project. The HSR, the first of its kind in the region, received considerable attention, both domestically and internationally, with many countries offering to share their experience and expertise for the project.

F&N Working On New Energy Drink To Replace Red Bull

KUALA LUMPUR -- Fraser & Neave Holdings Bhd is working on a new product to replace its energy drink Red Bull after the exclusive rights to distribute Red Bull expires on Sept 30, 2015. F&N Chief Executive Officer Lim Yew Hoe said the new product is still under extensive research in Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia and the group will work hard to come up with an energy product with the quality of Red Bull. "Red Bull is quite an established brand. If we cannot have Red Bull, we need to have another energy drink. We still have a few more months to go, and there is no need to rush to launch a new energy product. We would like to be very careful with what we do in making energy drinks as we want it to stay with us for a long period," he told reporters here Wednesday. He said the group had grown the Red Bull business to about 200-400 million cases worth about RM200 million to RM250 million in revenue.

Petronas, MISC, MMHE Convert Cargo Vessel Into Mobile Sea Base

KUALA LUMPUR -- Petronas, together with MISC Bhd and Malaysia Marine Heavy Engineering (MMHE), has converted Tun Azizan, a cargo vessel, into a mobile sea base ship with the necessity features to function as a long-term national security asset. Petronas Senior Vice-President of Corporate Strategy and Risk Adif Zulkifli said the group awarded the Engineering, Procurement, Construction, Installation and Commissioning contracts to MISC and its partner MMHE in November 2014 to refurbish and repurpose an idle cargo vessel into a mobile sea base. Tun Azizan, the first sea base concept in Malaysia and Southeast Asia, can accommodate 99 passengers with facilities such as accommodation, food storage, laundry room, an operations and communication room, power generation, air conditioning, fresh water system as well as military equipment and infrastructure. The name "Tun Azizan" was chosen for the vessel as a tribute to the late Tun Azizan Zainul Abidin, who was Petronas President, Chief Executive Officer and Chairman from 1988 to 2004.

Hub Incentive To Help Grow Services Sector's GDP Contribution - MIDA

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Malaysian Investment Development Authority (MIDA) hopes to improve the services sector's contribution to Gross Domestic Product to 65 per cent by 2020 from the current 55 per cent with the introduction of the principal hub incentive. MIDA Deputy Chief Executive Officer Datuk Phang Ah Tong said the incentive will offer tax relief to multinational companies (MNCs) wanting to make Malaysia a principal hub for their regional operations. "It will be based on a three-tier system, ranging from 10 per cent to zero per cent depending on the commitment of the particular MNC. A criterion for Tier-1 qualification, which entitles the investing company to zero per cent tax, is that they must spend RM10 million annually," he told reporters here Wednesday.

Delegation Of 10 Major US Firms Visiting Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR -- A delegation of the Asia-Pacific CEOs and Presidents of 10 major US companies will arrive in Kuala Lumpur Thursday to begin a series of meetings focused on long-term US business investment here and support for increased ASEAN economic integration. The US-ASEAN Business Council in a statement here Wednesday said the high-level delegation would visit Indonesia and Malaysia to meet with a wide variety of government officials and business leaders. It said that the companies in the delegation have substantial investments in Malaysia supporting hundreds of thousands of jobs, and are collectively planning or considering more than US$500 million (RM1.78 billion) in new investments in the next three to five years. The delegation includes companies from the ACE Group, Cigna, the Coca-Cola Company, DuPont, GE, Intel, Medtronic, Monsanto and Procter & Gamble.

Business Worldwide Not Prepared For #GenMobile Workforce Mindset

KUALA LUMPUR -- Businesses worldwide are unprepared for the high-risk and high-growth mindset of the #GenMobile workforce, a new mobile security risk report reveals. This is creating an alarming disparity around security practices in the corporate world and has moved Aruba Networks, Inc. to urge businesses to act. The, "Securing #GenMobile: Is Your Business Running the Risk" security threat study, which questioned over 11,500 workers from across 23 countries including Malaysia, showcased that employee attitudes are swaying towards more sharing of devices, yet an indifferent view to security in the workplace. #GenMobile are a group of people for whom smartphones have gone beyond personal entertainment and Bring your own device (BYOD). The study shows that younger males, especially those in the high tech and finance industries in Malaysia, pose the greatest risk to enterprise data security, Aruba said in a statement here Wednesday.

IP Protection Can Drive More Investments Into AEC : MyIPO

KUALA LUMPUR -- The harmonisation of intellectual property (IP) protection can drive more investments into the integrated Asean Economic Community (AEC). The Intellectual Property Corporation of Malaysia (MyIPO) said protecting, valuing and respecting IP is vital and its harmonisation will lead to more businesses activities in the AEC with a combined population of more than 600 million. "We foresee IP generating more income for the community, with greater foreign direct investments to member states when IP matters get harmonised. An effective IP system of governance and regulatory will help facilitate foreign investments," said its Deputy Director General, Abdul Aziz Ismail. He was speaking at a media briefing on MyIPO's plan to organise the Global Intellectual Property Valuation Conference (GIPVC) 2015 here Thursday. MyIPO announced the return of the biennial conference here from June 8-10, with an ASEAN centric theme, "Ideas2Value: Accelerate ASEAN".

Boeing 737 Max LEAP-1B Begins Extensive Flight Test Programme

KUALA LUMPUR -- Boeing and CFM International announced Thursday that they successfully initiated flight testing of the LEAP-1B engine on April 29 on a modified 747 flying testbed at GE Aviation Flight Test Operations in Victorville, California. The LEAP-1B is a product of CFM International, a 50/50 joint company between Snecma (Safran) and GE. The testing is the next major milestone in a two-year programme that will culminate in engine certification in 2016 and delivery of the first Boeing 737 MAX in 2017. The engine performed well and completed multiple aeromechanical test points at various altitudes during the five hour, 30 minute first flight. "I continue to be really impressed with the LEAP," said Chief Test Pilot Steven Crane, CFM International. These engines are demonstrating a maturity that you don't always see in new products. I think our airline customers are going to be very pleased with this engine," he said in a statement here Friday.

OTC 2015 To Help Promote Malaysian Companies In O&G Services

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Offshore Technology Conference (OTC) 2015 in Houston, Texas, from May 4-7 will help create greater awareness of Malaysia's capabilities and expertise in providing world-class oil and gas (O&G) services. Malaysian companies are expected to use the OTC as a launching pad to expand their business not only in North America, but also in Latin America, Canada, Africa and the Middle East. Malaysia is hosting the Industry Talks in conjunction with the event which will see the participation of 19 local O&G companies. The Malaysian External Trade Development Corporation (Matrade) in a statement said the OTC 2015, themed, "Connect, Partner & Grow," will feature Malaysian industry experts and exhibitors at the Malaysia Pavilion.

Seminar To Discuss Safety Measures In Chemical Industry, Standards

KUALA LUMPUR -- The safety measures in the chemical industry and international chemical standards are among the topics for discussion at the Globally Harmonised System (GHS) of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals seminar here Tuesday. "The GHS implementation will enhance the safe use of chemicals at the domestic, national and international levels. It will facilitate chemical trade activities, especially when chemicals are traded across country borders," said the Ministry of International Trade and Industry's (MITI) Deputy Minister, Datuk Lee Chee Leong in a statement. The GHS is a dynamic instrument and process, which requires continuous review, coordination, updating and further training.

BiotechCorp To Pick Young Scientists To Represent M'sia In Int'l BioCamp

KUALA LUMPUR -- Malaysian Biotechnology Corporation (BiotechCorp) will choose two young intellectuals to represent Malaysia in the Novartis International Biotechnology Leadership Camp (BioCamp) 2015 on Aug 23-26, 2015 in Basel, Switzerland. In partnership with Novartis Malaysia, a giant pharmaceutical company, and the Ministry of Education and Industry Centre of Excellence (ICoE), the two representatives will be selected out of the 34 graduate and post-graduate students at the Malaysia BioCamp 2015 (MBC). BiotechCorp Chairman, Tan Sri Dr Zakri Abdul Hamid, said here Tuesday, the 34 MBC participants were selected from regional BioCamp held earlier this year in Sarawak, Perlis, Kuala Lumpur, Pahang and Sabah.

AirAsia Inks MOA Benefiting 20 M'sian Public Universities

KUALA LUMPUR -- AirAsia Bhd Tuesday signed a memorandum of agreement (MoA) with 20 local public universities to enable their 650,000 staff members and students to travel more affordably and conveniently under the AirAsia 'Waran Perjalanan Udara Awam' (WPUA) programme. In a statement here, the low-cost carrier said the special scheme, for members of government agencies and statutory bodies including public universities, would allow them to travel and perform their duties to the public efficiently without excessive costs. AirAsia said it has the widest domestic network, connecting not just both Peninsular Malaysia and Sabah and Sarawak, but also destinations within Sabah and Sarawak, easing travel plans for students and staff of the public universities.

2nd Edition Of KLIHF To Be Staged In Brunei, Kuala Lumpur

KUCHING -- Following a successful debut in Kuala Lumpur last year, the second edition of the Kuala Lumpur International Hijab Fair (KLIHF), will be staged in Brunei and the federal capital. The international level Muslim fashion trade fair will be held at the International Convention Centre (ICC) in Bandar Seri Begawan from May 8-10. The fair will then move to Kuala Lumpur and the Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC) for four days from May 28. It is being organised based on the concept of "Business to Business" and "Business to Consumer". Event organiser Woj Wealth Sdn Bhd (WOJ) in a statement here Tuesday, said the second edition will portray a different concept and programme, while proving to be more exciting.

Petronas To Host 18th Asia Oil & Gas Conference On May 17-19

KUALA LUMPUR -- National oil company, Petronas will be hosting the 18th Asia Oil and Gas Conference (AOGC), themed 'Realising Opportunities Amidst Challenges' on May 17-19, 2015 at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre. This year's edition will focus on hot topics such as novel technology exchange, collaboration strategies, monetisation of unconventional resources and addressing the tensions between suppliers and consumers of gas. It will also introduce the CEO Strategic Dialogue, which will be the highlight of the event, Petronas said in a statement here Tuesday. Its President and Group Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Datuk Wan Zulkiflee Wan Ariffin, will chair the AOGC 2015 advisory panel and organising committee as well as address the CEO Strategic Dialogue.

MAS Appoints New Chief Information Officer

KUALA LUMPUR -- Malaysia Airlines (MAS) has appointed Tan Kok Meng as its new Chief Information Officer, effective May 18, 2015. Prior to his appointment, Tan was the Group CIO & Head, Regional Shared Services of Malayan Banking Bhd and had served as Programme Director, Finance Transformation of AstraZeneca (Malaysia), the airline said in a statement here Tuesday. "Tan brings with him over 20 years of experience in the IT and management capacities and will assist the company in developing enhanced IT structures and support moving forward," Chief Executive Officer Christoph Mueller said.

Malaysia's Economic Corridors On Radar Of Investors

By Mohd Iswandi Kasan Anuar

KUALA LUMPUR (Bernama) -- Malaysia's five economic corridors are set to stay firmly on the radar of local and foreign investors with the many business activities and job opportunities, while driven by new tax incentives for less developed areas as announced by the government recently.

The new incentives, among others, will see newly established companies or existing entities that expand operations into less developed areas throughout Malaysia, being eligible for a 100 per cent income tax exemption for up to 15 years.

To date, the East Coast Economic Region, Iskandar Malaysia, Northern Corridor Economic Region, Sabah Development Corridor and Sarawak Corridor of Renewable Energy, continue to enjoy great success in attracting the best fit investments to target areas.

The ambitious economic corridors were launched under the Ninth Malaysia Plan for 2006-2010 to achieve balanced development in the country.

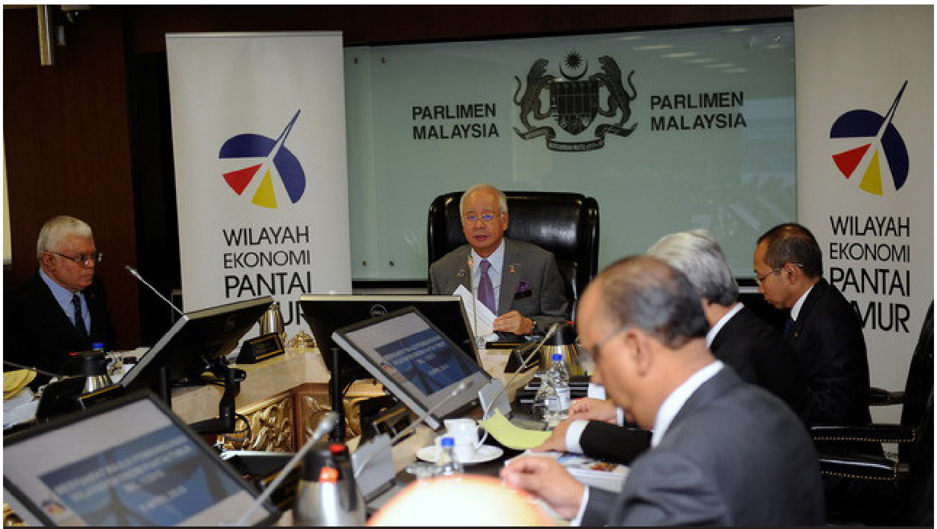
The East Coast Economic Region Development Council's (ECERDC) chief executive officer Datuk Seri Jebasingam Issac John said the new incentives were an added bonus, particularly for small medium-sized industries, in attracting more direct domestic investments.

JOB, BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

He felt this would ultimately benefit the rural population in terms of new job creation and business opportunities, which is in line with the government's New Economic Model, aimed at creating a high income nation by 2020.

"These new incentives will complement ECER's existing ones and positively impact our region," he told Bernama. He said that ECER is comparatively less developed than the west coast of peninsular Malaysia.

To ensure the region reaps its full potential, Jebasingam said ECERDC will work closely with the Malaysian Investment Development Authority (MIDA) and the Ministry of International Trade and Industry, following



PITCHING INVESTORS...Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak chairing the ECERDC meeting at Parliament House on April 9. Also present Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Abdul Wahid Omar (right), ECER CEO Datuk Jebasingam Issace John (left), Second Minister of Finance Datuk Seri Ahmad Husni Hanadzlah, Terengganu Menteri Besar Datuk Ahmad Razif Abdul Rahman and Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Dr Ali Hamsa. --fotoBERNAMA

the introduction of the new incentives. On another incentive, the capital allowance for automation in labour intensive industries, he said this would encourage and attract high tech manufacturing companies to establish their operations or make Malaysia a hub for regional operations.

INDUSTRIAL MANAGEMENT

In addition, the incentive for industrial area management will promote the creation of well-maintained and managed industrial areas in the country, including at the ECER, he added.

The ECER, which occupies an area of 66,000 sq km or 51 per cent of the total area of Peninsular Malaysia, covers Kelantan, Terengganu, Pahang and the district of Mersing in Johor.

It has five key economic clusters, namely manufacturing, oil, gas and petrochemicals, tourism, agriculture and human capital development.

Earlier, Jebasingam said ECER's existing incentives were formulated by the government by taking into consideration, the regional perspective.

It also tends to be more flexible towards correcting the regional imbalance that currently exists between the east and west coast regions.

ATTRACTIVE INCENTIVES

At present, he said ECER offered highly attractive incentives for investors, including an income tax exemption of 100 per cent for 10 years, commencing from the year company derived its statutory income.

"Moreover, customised incentives are given to companies based on the merit of each case. Non-fiscal incentives are also granted by the respective state governments to approved companies.

"These include competitive land prices, land ready with infrastructure and flexibility in the employment of expatriates," Jebasingam added.

From 2007 to March this year, ECER successfully attracted RM73.04 billion in investments, in creating 73,708 new job opportunities.

The figure represents 66 per cent of ECER's RM110 billion investment target by 2020.
-- BERNAMA

LIST OF MARKET REPORTS :

BURSA MALAYSIA

Bursa : FBM KLCI To Trade Sideways Next Week
By Siti Radziah Hamzah

KUALA LUMPUR -- The benchmark FTSE Bursa Malaysia KLCI (FBM KLCI) is likely to remain moderately cautious and continue to trade sideways with an upside bias between 1,820 and 1,840 points next week.

Affin Hwang Investment Bank Vice-President and Head of Retail Research Datuk Dr Nazri Khan said Wall Street and Bursa Malaysia would gradually stabilise as global monetary policies ease.

In addition, the local bourse will see the mega listing of Malakoff Corporation Bhd, the ringgit strengthening, improving Brent crude oil prices and the tabling of 11th Malaysian Economic Plan later this month.

Nazri told Bernama a huge allocation was likely to be given under the 11th Malaysian Plan to transform Malaysia into a developed nation by 2020.

He expected greater speculation on stocks linked to the new economic plan especially those related to infrastructure, Islamic finance and green economy.

"Traders should look at our Top 20 stocks that may benefit from the mega economic plan, rising ringgit and rising oil prices which includes Petronas Dagangan, Ahmad Zaki Resources Bhd, Gamuda Bhd and Fraser & Neave Holdings Bhd," he noted.

On a Friday-to-Thursday basis, weekly turnover declined to 6.81 billion units, worth RM7.63 billion, from 7.40 billion units, worth RM8.27 billion, recorded previously. Main market volume decreased to 4.0 billion shares, valued at RM7.04 billion, versus 4.54 billion shares, valued RM7.61 billion, recorded last week.

FOREX: Ringgit Expected To Rebound Against Greenback Next Week
By Zarul Effendi Razali

KUALA LUMPUR -- The ringgit is expected to rebound against the US dollar next week, driven by positive catalysts in the local market coupled with a weakening greenback, dealers said.

Affin Hwang Investment Bank Vice-President/Head of Retail Research Datuk Dr Nazri Khan Adam Khan said the ringgit appreciated the most in three months as the US dollar touched its lowest level in 11 weeks while the Malaysian economy benefited from rising oil prices.

"Ringgit firmed up against a weighted basket of its peers, after earlier hitting its lowest point in six years on March 16th (3.7410), as foreign funds inflow continued to accumulate in Malaysian defensive assets," he told Bernama.

He said the firming up of the ringgit and oil prices is positive as it enhanced the prospects for Malaysian sovereign rating upgrades by international rating agency. "Further turnaround in oil prices and commodities is likely to increase Malaysian surplus and reduce government deficit," he added.

Bank Negara's move to maintain interest rates at 3.25 per cent on Thursday was also expected to have a positive impact on the ringgit's movement next week.

For the holiday-shortened week, the ringgit traded lower against the US dollar at 3.5950/5980 from last Thursday's 3.5600/5630.

It appreciated versus the yen to 2.9936/9973 from 2.9944/9971 but eased against the British pound to 5.5643/5701 from 5.5006/4073, fell against the euro to 4.0383/0427 from 3.9897/8941 and slipped against the Singapore dollar to 2.7004/7036 from 2.6917/6958 last Thursday.

The foreign exchange market was closed on Friday and Monday for two local holidays.

Money-Market: Short-Term Rates Likely To Stay Stable Next Week

KUALA LUMPUR -- Short-term rates are expected to remain stable next week on Bank Negara Malaysia's (BNM) intervention in the money market to absorb surplus liquidity. A dealer said the central bank was expected to continue to call for money market tenders on a daily basis.

For the week just-ended, BNM intervened daily by conducting conventional, Al-Wadiah, repo, reverse repo and Commodity Murabahah programme tenders to reduce excess liquidity in the system.

The overnight rate for the week stood at 3.21 per cent, while the one-, two- and three-week rates stood at 3.27 per cent, 3.32 per cent and 3.35 per cent, respectively. The benchmark three-month KLIBOR stood at 3.72 per cent.

On Friday, the total liquidity surplus in the conventional system was reduced to RM23.27 billion from an earlier estimate of RM29.37 billion. In the Islamic system, the liquidity surplus was trimmed to RM5.95 billion from an earlier forecast of RM14.30 billion.

Following this, the central bank issued a late conventional money market tender for RM23.3 billion and a RM6 billion Al-Wadiah money market tender, both for five-day money. The local market was closed on Monday, May 4, in lieu of the Wesak Day public holiday on Sunday.

KLCI Futures Likely To Be Cautious Better Next Week

By Siti Radziah Hamzah

KUALA LUMPUR -- The FTSE Bursa Malaysia KLCI (FBM KLCI) futures contract on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives is likely to trend cautiously next week, tracking the performane on the equity market, a dealer said.

The local bourse is expected to stabilise and move sideways after being squeezed by negative sentiment on the global economic front. The market was closed on Monday for the Wesak day celebration.

For the week just-ended, the futures market traded mixed. May 2015 declined nine points to 1,806, June 2015 shed 11.5 points to 1,806 and September slid 13.5 points to 1,799 while December 2015 stood at 1,799.

Turnover for the week depreciated to 30,961 lots from 91,391 lots last week, while open interest eased to 38,111 contracts from 50,958 contracts previously.

CPO Futures To Trade Between RM2,060 & RM2,150 Next Week

KUALA LUMPUR -- Crude palm oil (CPO) futures contract on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives is expected to trade within RM2,060 and RM2,150 a tonne next week.

Interband Group of Companies Senior Palm Oil trader Jim Teh said higher production, due to good weather, and rising stocks in major producing countries are the key factors that will drive commodity prices.

The Malaysian Palm Oil Board's data for April, due on Monday, will also provide further directions to the market. "The movement of crude oil prices will also affect CPO price movements next week," he told Bernama. On a weekly basis, May 2015 rose RM76 to RM2,146 a tonne, June 2015 gained RM64 to RM2,169 a tonne while July 2015 and August 2015 added RM60 each to RM2,162 and RM2,163 a tonne, respectively.

Weekly turnover fell to 165,967 lots from 193,423 lots last week while open interest widened to 220,698 contracts from 209,511 contracts, previously. On the physical market, May South rose RM70 to RM2,180 a tonne.

Rubber Market To Trade Mixed Next Week

By Sharifah Pirdaus Syed Ali

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Malaysian rubber market is expected to remain mixed next week as it digests the outcome of the US jobs data and China's economic data which holds the clue to the commodity's outlook in terms of fresh demand.

The Tokyo Commodity Exchange (TOCOM) will also continue to influence local sentiment, a dealer said, adding that TOCOM futures was pressured by profit taking activities this week. The market was closed on Monday for the Wesak Day holiday. The Association of Natural Rubber Producing Countries met this week to discuss long-term price stability and other issues.

On a weekly basis, the Malaysian Rubber Board's official physical price for tyre-grade SMR 20 ended the week 30 sen better at 534 sen a kg and latex-in-bulk rose 15 sen to 425.50 sen a kg.

The unofficial closing price for tyre-grade SMR 20 increased 25.5 sen to 534 sen a kg and latex-in-bulk rose 14 sen to 426 sen a kg.

KLIBOR Futures To Remain Flat Next Week

KUALA LUMPUR -- The three-month Kuala Lumpur Interbank Offered Rate (KLIBOR) futures contract on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives is expected to remain flat next week.

For the week just ended, the market was traded slightly lower. Turnover totalled 20 lots while open interest amounted to 902 contracts.

On a week-to-week basis, May 2015 , June 2015, July 2015 and September 2015 eased one tick each to 96.31, 96.34, 96.38 and 96.41, respectively.

The underlying three-month KLIBOR remained pegged at 3.72 per cent. The local market was closed on Monday for a local holiday.

Tin Price To Remain Above US$16,000 A Tonne Next Week

KUALA LUMPUR -- Tin price on the Kuala Lumpur Tin Market (KLTM) is expected to remain above US$16,000 a tonne next week, supported by stronger demand from European traders.

Demand from Europe is expected to increase given the positive economic data released out of the Eurozone and strong corporate earnings.

“While the metal’s price is anticipated to be slightly lower than Friday’s closing of US$16,050 a tonne, the projected tin price for next week is still commendable as it will sustain above the US$16,000 a tonne level,” said a dealer.

The metal fluctuated between US$16,050 and US$16,199 a tonne for the just-ended holiday shortened week while turnover was up at 244 tonnes from 147 tonnes recorded previously.

The local market was closed on Monday for the Wesak festival. The price differential between the KLTM and LME widened to a premium of US$390 a tonne on Friday versus US$295 a tonne previously.

Gold Futures Likely To Trade Lower On Strong US Data

KUALA LUMPUR -- Gold futures contracts on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives are likely to trade lower next week, on weaker demand for the precious metal due to stronger United States nonfarm payroll data.

The US reported a gain of 223,000 non-farm jobs in April, a bounce from the disappointing rise of 126,000 in March.

Phillip Futures Sdn Bhd dealer Lim Eng Wee said the strong data would support the view that the Federal Reserve would act sooner rather than later in increasing interest rates, thus putting the pressure on gold.

“Rising rates tend to lift the opportunity cost of holding non-yielding bullion while boosting the dollar, in which the gold is priced,” he told Bernama.

On a Friday-to-Thursday basis, May 2015 fell 16 ticks to RM137.25 a gramme, June 2015 declined 14 ticks to RM137.70 a gramme, July 2015 erased 13 ticks to RM138.10 a gramme and August 2015 decreased 18 ticks to RM138.25 a gramme.
The local market was closed on Monday for the Wesak Day public holiday.

Volume for the four-day trading week fell to 532 lots worth RM7.3 million from 591 lots worth RM8.05 million last week while open interest was lower at 2,256 contracts from 3,527 contracts last Thursday.

On the physical front, the gold price was 53 sen lower at RM132.90 a gramme compared with RM133.43 a gramme last week.